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(54) **POWER STORAGE APPARATUS**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

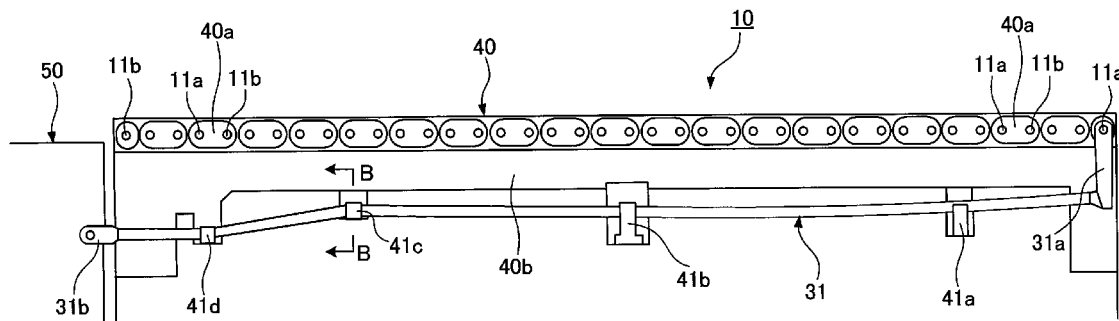
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(Continued)

A power storage apparatus includes a power storage module having a plurality of power storage elements which are aligned in one direction; a device placed adjacently to the power storage module in the direction of the alignment of the power storage elements; a high-voltage cable used in charge and discharge of the power storage module; and a support structure configured to support the high-voltage cable at a plurality of points to position the high-voltage cable along a reference path. The high-voltage cable is configured to electrically connect an electrode terminal of the power storage module to the device. The electrode terminal is one of two electrode terminals of the power storage module and is located on a farther side of the power storage module from the device.

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(2013.01); **F16L 13/00** (2013.01); **H01M 2/10**
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FIG. 1

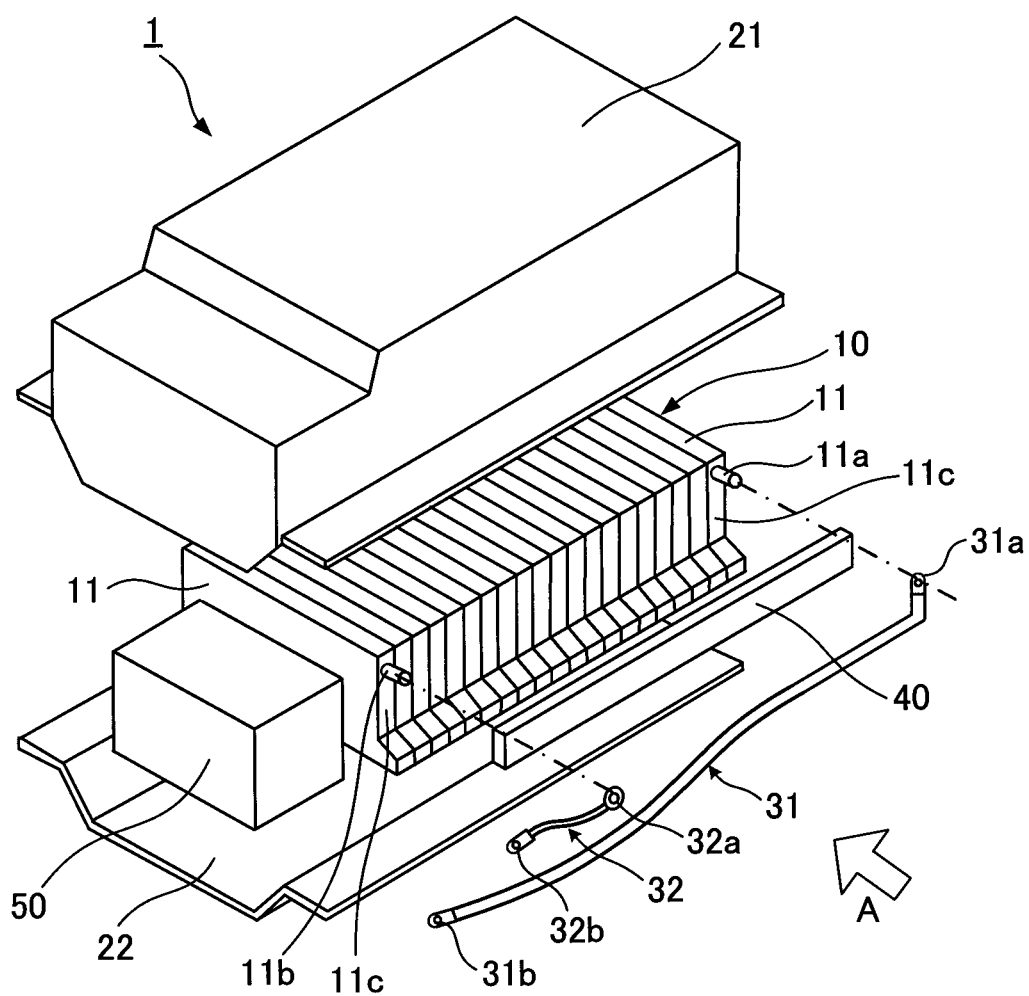


FIG.2

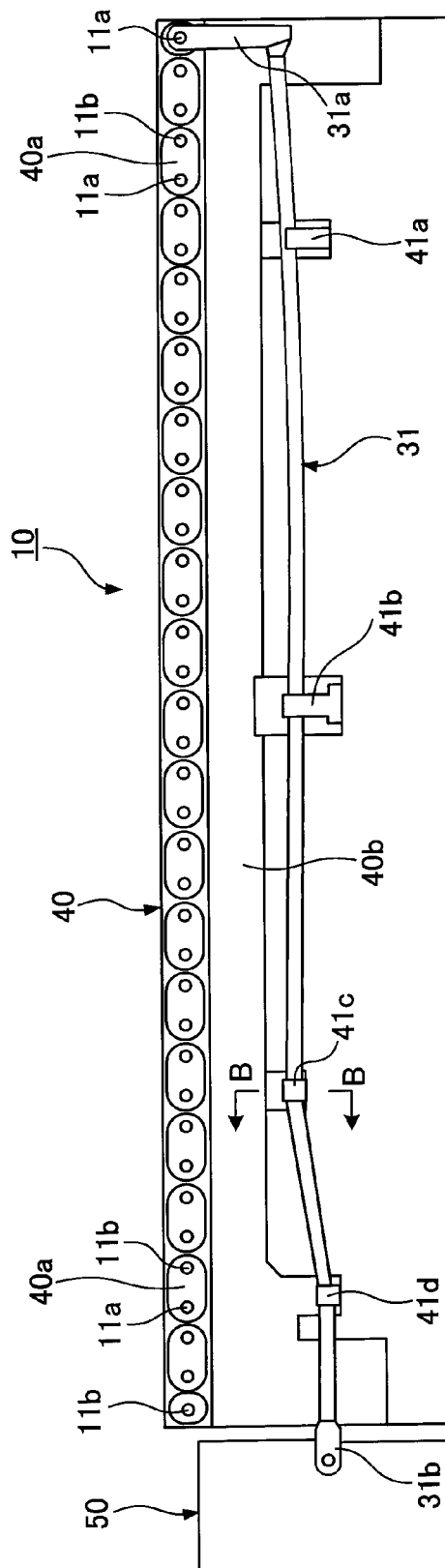
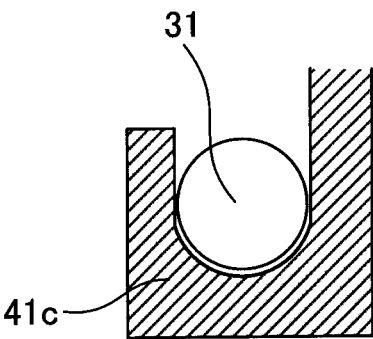


FIG.3



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POWER STORAGE APPARATUS

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a power storage apparatus including a high-voltage cable for use in charge and discharge of a power storage module.

BACKGROUND

In a battery module in which a plurality of cells are electrically connected in series, a negative cable and a positive cable are connected as high-voltage cables to electrode terminals (corresponding to a positive terminal and a negative terminal of battery module) in two particular cells in order to perform charge and discharge of the battery module (see, Japanese patent laid-open publication No. 2006-228526). The positive cable has one end connected to the positive terminal of the battery module and the other end connected to a device (for example, a relay). The negative cable has one end connected to the negative terminal of the battery module and the other end connected to the device (for example, a relay).

In the abovementioned conventional structure, it may be difficult to connect both ends of the high-voltage cable at predetermined connection positions due to the tolerance of the length of the high-voltage cable. For example, in a state in which the one end of the positive cable is connected to the positive terminal of the battery module, it may be difficult to connect the other end of the positive cable to the device.

SUMMARY

It is thus an object of the present invention to provide a power storage apparatus in which both ends of a high-voltage cable for use in charge and discharge of a power storage module can be easily connected at predetermined connection positions even when the high-voltage cable has a tolerance of a length direction.

A power storage apparatus according to the present invention comprises a power storage module including a plurality of power storage elements which are aligned in one direction and electrically connected with each other; a device placed adjacently to the power storage module in the direction of the alignment of the power storage elements; and a high-voltage cable used in charge and discharge of the power storage module. The high-voltage cable is configured to electrically connect an electrode terminal of the power storage module to the device. Herein the electrode terminal is one of two electrode terminals (positive terminal and negative terminal) of the power storage module and is located on a farther side of the power storage module from the device. In addition, the power storage apparatus comprises a support structure which is configured to support the high-voltage cable at a plurality of points to position the high-voltage cable along a reference path.

The reference path means a previously established path for placing the high-voltage cable to locate both ends of the high-voltage cable at predetermined positions. On the other hand, the above-mentioned support structure can be provided for a bus bar module for electrically connecting the plurality of power storage elements. This can reduce the number of parts to achieve cost cutting.

According to the present invention, the high-voltage cable can be placed along the reference path and both ends of the high-voltage cable can be located at the predetermined positions even when the high-voltage cable has the tolerance of

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the length direction. Thus, both ends of the high-voltage cable can be easily connected to the electrode terminal of the power storage module and the device.

DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is an exploded view showing the structure of a battery pack which is Embodiment 1 of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a side view showing part of the battery module in Embodiment 1 when viewed from a direction indicated by an arrow A in FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a section view showing the structure of a support portion provided for a bus bar module in Embodiment 1 and taken along a line B-B in FIG. 2.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

An embodiment of the present invention will hereinafter be described.

[Embodiment 1]

The structure of a battery pack (power storage apparatus) which is Embodiment 1 of the present invention will be described with reference to FIG. 1 which is an exploded view showing the structure of the battery pack. The battery pack of the present embodiment can be mounted on a vehicle. The types of the vehicle include a hybrid vehicle and an electric vehicle. The hybrid vehicle is a vehicle which includes an internal combustion engine or a fuel cell in addition to the battery pack as a power source for generating the running energy (kinetic energy) of the vehicle. The electric vehicle is a vehicle which runs by using only the output from the battery pack.

The battery pack 1 has a battery module (power storage module) 10 which is formed of a plurality of cells (power storage elements) 11 electrically connected in series. The plurality of cells 11 are aligned in one direction, and a spacer (not shown) is placed between adjacent two of the cells 11. The spacer provides space for moving air or the like used to control the temperature of the cell 11 between the two adjacent cells 11.

Serving as the cell 11, a secondary battery such as a nickel metal hydride battery and a lithium-ion battery can be used. Alternatively, an electric double layer capacitor can be used instead of the secondary battery. The number of the cells 11 constituting the battery module 10 can be set as appropriate based on the output performance which should be achieved by the battery module 10. In the present embodiment, the plurality of cells 11 are aligned in one direction, the present invention is not limited thereto. For example, a battery unit integrally constituted by the plurality of cells 11 is prepared and the plurality of battery units can be aligned in one direction. In this case, the plurality of cells 11 constituting battery unit are electrically connected with each other.

Although not shown, a pair of end plates is placed at both ends of the battery module 10 in the direction in which the cells 11 are arranged. A restraint rod which extends in the arrangement direction of the cells 11 is connected to the pair of end plates. This applies force (restraint force) to the plurality of cells 11 constituting the battery module 10 and the force acts in a direction in which the adjacent two cells 11 are brought closer to each other. The restraint force can suppress thermal expansion of the cells 11.

A positive terminal 11a and a negative terminal 11b are provided for two side face portions 11c in each of the cells 11. FIG. 1 shows only one of the side face portions 11c in each cell 11. In addition, in FIG. 1, the positive terminals and the negative terminals are omitted in some of the cells 11. The

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positive terminal **11a** of each cell **11** is electrically connected to the negative terminal **11b** of the adjacent cell **11**.

A bus bar module **40** is used to connect electrically in series the plurality of cells **11** constituting the battery module **10**. The bus bar module **40** is provided at a position opposite to each of the two side face portions **11c** of the each cell **11**. FIG. 1 shows only one of the two bus bar modules **40**. As shown in FIG. 2, the bus bar module **40** has a plurality of bus bars **40a** for electrically connecting the positive terminals **11a** to the associated negative terminals **11b**, and a base **40b** for holding the bus bars **40a**. Each of the bus bars **40a** is made of a material having electrical conductivity (for example, metal). The base **40b** is made of a nonconductive material (for example, resin).

Of the plurality of cells **11** constituting the battery module **10**, the cell **11** placed at one end in the arrangement direction of the cells **11** (the cell **11** farthest from a device box **50**) has the positive terminal **11a** which serves as a positive terminal of the battery module **10**. A positive cable (high-voltage cable) **31** for use in charge and discharge of the battery module **10** is connected to the positive terminal **11a**. Specifically, a connection terminal **31a** provided at one end of the positive cable **31a** is in contact with the bus bar **40a** of the bus bar module **40** that is connected to the positive terminal **11a** of the battery module **10**.

Of the plurality of cells **11** constituting the battery module **10**, the cell **11** placed at the other end in the arrangement direction of the cells **11** (the cell **11** closest to the device box **50**) has the negative terminal **11b** which serves as a negative terminal of the battery module **10**. A negative cable (high-voltage cable) **32** for use in charge and discharge of the battery module **10** is connected to the negative terminal **11b**. Specifically, a connection terminal **32a** provided at one end of the negative cable **32** is in contact with the bus bar **40a** of the bus bar module **40** that is connected to the negative terminal **11b** of the battery module **10**.

The device box **50** is placed at a position adjacent to the battery module **10** in the arrangement direction of the cells **11**. The device box **50** accommodates, for example, a battery monitoring unit for monitoring the voltage, the temperature and the like of the cells **11**, a service plug for interrupting the passage of electric current through the battery module **10**, an electric-current sensor for detecting electric current in the cells **11**, and relays. In the present embodiment, a connection terminal **31b** provided at the other end of the positive cable **31** and a connection terminal **32b** provided at the other end of the negative cable **32** are connected at their predetermined connection positions to the relays in the device box **50**, respectively.

In the present embodiment, the output (direct-current power) from the battery module **10** is boosted by a DC/DC converter, converted into alternating-current power by an inverter, and then supplied to a motor generator. This drives the motor generator to produce the running energy (kinetic energy) of the vehicle. On the other hand, for braking the vehicle, the power (alternating-current power) produced by the motor generator is converted into direct-current power by the inverter, stepped down by the DC/DC converter, and then supplied to the battery module **10**. Thus, the battery module **10** is charged.

The battery module **10** and the device box **50** are surrounded by an upper case **21** and a lower case **22**. In other words, the upper case **21** and the lower case **22** are fixed to each other by a fastening member such as bolts to provide space for accommodating the battery module **10** and the device box **50**. The battery module **10** and the device box **50** are fixed to the lower case **22** by a fastening member.

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Next, description will be made of a support structure for the positive cable **31** in the battery pack **1** of the present embodiment with reference to FIGS. 2 and 3. FIG. 2 is a side view showing the structure of part of the battery module **10** when viewed from a direction indicated by an arrow A in FIG. 1. FIG. 3 is a section view showing the structure of a support portion for supporting the positive cable **31** and taken along a line B-B in FIG. 2.

A plurality of (four) support portions **41a** to **41d** are formed integrally with the base **40b** of the bus bar module **40**. These support portions **41a** to **41d** are provided on a surface of the bus bar module **40** that is opposed to a side face of the upper case **21**. The positive terminal **11a** of the battery module **10** electrically connected to the connection terminal **31a** of the positive cable **31** is located above the portion of the device box **50** that is connected to the connection terminal **31b**. In the present embodiment, as shown in FIG. 2, the level at which the positive cable **31** is located is lowered stepwise from the connection terminal **31a** toward the connection terminal **31b**.

As shown in FIG. 3, the support portion **41c** has a structure to catch the positive cable **31**. Part of the surface (inner wall surface) of the support portion **41c** that is in contact with the positive cable **31** is formed to have a shape conforming to the outer peripheral surface of the positive cable **31**. In the present embodiment, the positive cable **31** can be fitted from above to the support portion **41c**. Part of the positive cable **31** is brought into contact with the support portion **41c** to perform the positioning of the positive cable **31**.

While the bus bar module **40** has the support portions **41a**, **41b**, and **41d** having different shapes from that of the support portion **41c**, the functions of the support portions **41a**, **41b**, and **41d** are the same as that of the support portion **41c**. Specifically, the positive cable **31** is fitted from above to each of the support portions **41a**, **41b**, and **41d**, and each of the support portions **41a**, **41b**, and **41d** is formed to catch the positive cable **31**. Part of the surface (inner wall surface) of each of the support portions **41a**, **41b**, and **41d** that is in contact with the positive cable **31** is formed to have a shape conforming to the outer peripheral surface of the positive cable **31**.

In the structure in which the positive cable **31** is used to connect electrically the positive terminal **11a** of the battery module **10** to the relay in the device box **50**, it may be difficult to connect the connection terminals **31a** and **31b** of the positive cable **31** at predetermined connection positions due to the tolerance of the length of the positive cable **31**. For example, for connecting the connection terminal **31b** of the positive cable **31** to the device box **50** after the connection terminal **31a** is connected to the positive terminal **11a** of the battery module **10**, it may be difficult to locate the connection terminal **31b** at a predetermined connection portion in the device box **50**.

In the present embodiment, the support portions **41a** to **41d** for supporting the positive cable **31** are provided in the plane in which the positive cable **31** is placed, in other words, on the surface of the bus bar module **40**, such that the positive cable **31** is placed along a predetermined path (reference path). The reference path means a previously established path for placing the positive cable **31** to connect the connection terminal **31a** to the positive terminal **11a** of the battery module **10** and to connect the connection terminal **31b** to the predetermined connection portion in the device box **50**.

The positive cable **31** is placed along the reference path in this manner to allow easy connection of the connection terminal **31a** to the positive terminal **11a** of the battery module **10** and easy connection of the connection terminal **31b** to the predetermined connection portion in the device box **50**. In

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other words, it is possible to reduce variations in the position where the positive cable **31** is placed and thus to prevent the difficulty in connecting the connection terminals **31a** and **31b** at the predetermined connection positions due to the tolerance of the length of the positive cable **31**.

When the positive cable **31** is longer than the reference path, part of the positive cable **31** can be sagged. For example, the portion of the positive cable **31** that is placed between the two support portions **41a** and **41b** can be sagged. This can prevent displacements of the connection terminals **31a** and **31b** of the positive cable **31**. The sagged portion of the positive cable **31** is not limited to the portion placed between the two support portions **41a** and **41b** but can be any portion placed between the other support portions.

In the present embodiment, the positive cable **31** has already been attached to the bus bar module **40** when the bus bar module **40** is mounted on the battery module **10**, so that the battery pack **1** can be easily assembled. In other words, since the positive cable **31** can be positioned in advance by the bus bar module **40**, the positive cable **31** can be easily mounted.

While the positive terminal **11a** of the battery module **10** is located above the connection portion of the device box **50** to the positive cable **31** (connection terminal **31b**) in the present embodiment, the present invention is not limited thereto. Specifically, the positive terminal **11a** of the battery module **10** and the abovementioned connection portion of the device box **50** can be placed at substantially the same level, or the abovementioned connection portion of the device box **50** can be located above the positive terminal **11a** of the battery module **10**. In either case, the positive cable **31** can be placed along the predetermined reference path by using the support portions **41a** to **41d** described in the present embodiment.

While the positive terminal **11a** of the battery module **10** is provided at the position farthest from the device box **50** in the arrangement direction of the cells **11** in the present embodiment, the present invention is not limited thereto. Specifically, the positive terminal **11a** of the battery module **10** can be placed at a position adjacent to the device box **50** and the negative terminal **11b** of the battery module **10** can be placed at a position farthest from the device box **50**. In this case, the negative cable **32** can be supported by the plurality of support portions **41a** to **41d** formed in the bus bar module **40**.

While the support portions **41a** to **41d** for supporting the positive cable **31** are provided for the bus bar module **40** in the present embodiment, the present invention is not limited thereto. Specifically, it is essential only that the support portions for supporting the positive cable **31** at a plurality of points should be provided within a plane on which the positive cable **31** is placed, and these support portions can be provided in a member different from the bus bar module **40**. However, the support portions **41a** to **41d** formed in the bus bar module **40** allow the bus bar module **40** to have the function of electrically connecting the plurality of cells **11** and the function of supporting the positive cable **31**. In other words, the number of parts can be decreased to reduce the size of the battery pack **1**.

While the high-voltage cable (positive cable **31**) is placed along the side portions **11c** of the cells **11** in the present embodiment, the present invention is not limited thereto. Specifically, the present invention is applicable when the high-voltage cable is placed along upper surfaces of the cells **11**. In other words, it is essential only that the support portions for supporting the high-voltage cable at a plurality of points should be provided within a plane on which the high-voltage cable is placed. These support portions can be formed inte-

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grally with the upper surfaces of the cells **11** or can be formed in a member different from the cells **11**.

What is claimed is:

1. A power storage apparatus comprising:

- a power storage module including a plurality of power storage elements which are aligned in one direction;
- a bus bar module configured to electrically connect the power storage elements;
- a device placed adjacently to the power storage module in the direction of the alignment of the power storage elements;
- a high-voltage cable used in charge and discharge of the power storage module and configured to electrically connect a first electrode terminal of the power storage module to the device, the first electrode terminal being one of two electrode terminals of the power storage module and being located on a farther side of the power storage module from the device; and
- a connection terminal mechanically connected to the first electrode terminal and having an elongate shape that extends downward from the first electrode terminal,

wherein:

- an end face of the high-voltage cable is directly connected to a side edge of a lower portion of the connection terminal,
- the bus bar module includes a plurality of support portions supporting the high-voltage cable at a plurality of points, each support portion of the plurality of support portions including inner wall surfaces defining a directly upward facing opening;
- the inner wall surfaces include first and second substantially planar surfaces, the first and second substantially planar surfaces being substantially parallel to one another in the region of the opening;
- the bus bar module positions the high-voltage cable along a reference path;
- the bus bar module is configured such that when the bus bar module electrically connects the power storage elements, the high-voltage cable is fittable from above the bus bar module into each of the support portions;
- the high-voltage cable is arranged between the first and second substantially planar surfaces and is in direct contact with each of the first and second substantially planar surfaces;
- the first and second substantially planar surfaces form a space therebetween, the space allowing movement of the high-voltage cable in upward and downward directions when the plurality of support portions support the high-voltage cable; and
- the high-voltage cable is arranged along a straight line from the side edge of the lower portion of the connection terminal to the support portion of the plurality of support portions located nearest to the connection terminal.

2. The power storage apparatus according to claim 1, wherein:

- the bus bar module has a plurality of bus bars configured to electrically connect the power storage elements, and the support portions are provided on one surface of the bus bar module opposite to other surface of the bus bar module facing the power storage elements.

3. The power storage apparatus according to claim 1, wherein a connecting position of the connection terminal and the first electrode terminal is located above a connecting position of the high-voltage cable and the device, and wherein the plurality of support portions lower a level where the high-voltage cable is located from the connecting position of the connection terminal and the first

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electrode terminal toward the connecting position of the high-voltage cable and the device.

4. The power storage apparatus according to claim 1, wherein when the bus bar module electrically connects the power storage elements, the bus bar module is positioned in a vertical direction and includes a top portion and a bottom portion; and

wherein the top portion of the bus bar module electrically connects the power storage elements and the bottom portion of the bus bar module includes the plurality of support portions.

5. The power storage apparatus according to claim 4, wherein when the bus bar module electrically connects the power storage elements, the high-voltage cable is fittable from the top portion of the bus bar module into each of the support portions located in the bottom portion.

6. A power storage apparatus comprising:

a power storage module including a plurality of power storage elements which are aligned in one direction;

a bus bar module configured to electrically connect the power storage elements;

a device placed adjacently to the power storage module in the direction of the alignment of the power storage elements;

a high-voltage cable used in charge and discharge of the power storage module and configured to electrically connect a first electrode terminal of the power storage module to the device, the first electrode terminal being one of two electrode terminals of the power storage module and being located on a farther side of the power storage module from the device; and

a connection terminal mechanically connected to the first electrode terminal and having an elongate shape that extends downward from the first electrode terminal,

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wherein:

an end face of the high-voltage cable is directly connected to a side edge of a lower portion of the connection terminal,

the bus bar module includes a plurality of support portions supporting the high-voltage cable at a plurality of points, each support portion of the plurality of support portions including inner wall surfaces defining a directly upward facing opening;

the inner wall surfaces include first and second substantially planar surfaces, the first and second substantially planar surfaces being substantially parallel to one another in the region of the opening;

the bus bar module positions the high-voltage cable along a reference path;

the bus bar module is configured such that when the bus bar module electrically connects the power storage elements, the high-voltage cable is fittable from above the bus bar module into each of the support portions;

the high-voltage cable is arranged between the first and second substantially planar surfaces and is in direct contact with each of the first and second substantially planar surfaces;

the first and second substantially planar surfaces form a space therebetween, the space allowing movement of the high-voltage cable in upward and downward directions;

each support portion of the plurality of support portions has a different shape and size than other support portions of the plurality of support portions; and

the high-voltage cable is arranged along a straight line from the side edge of the lower portion of the connection terminal to the support portion of the plurality of support portions located nearest to the connection terminal.

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